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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR. JOINT STAFF  
FOR LTGEN SELVA, JERUSALEM PASS AMB. HALE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2020

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: MORATORIUM UPDATE: EASINGS ANNOUNCED, RUMORS  
ABOUND

Classified By: A/DCM Marc Sievers for reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (C) Summary: On January 7, the MOD announced that amendments have been made to the GOI's moratorium order, which will, inter alia, return some permitting and building authority to local settler leaders. However, the announcement made it clear that new approvals will remain frozen and construction of new housing units will still be prohibited. In response to press reports, an Embassy MOD contact has emphatically denied that enforcement entities are already prepared to demolish structures in violation of the moratorium. End Summary.

12. (C) On the evening of January 7, the MOD issued a revision to the settlements construction moratorium order, which returns some planning authorizations to local municipal leaders. The changes will allow local authorities to grant permits for modifications of existing buildings, construction of public infrastructure inside the limits of settlements, and advance plans that are currently in the building permit process. The order expressly states, however, that new housing units will not be allowed and that the final approval process for construction plans will remain frozen, as per the original moratorium order. During the past month, Israeli press had been reporting that the announcement of such easings was imminent. In discussing this possibility weeks ago, Oded Herman, of the MOD's Political-Military Bureau, told EconOff that all approvals would still require MOD Barak's and PM Netanyahu's signatures; thus, he reasoned that returning permit responsibilities to the municipalities would have little practical impact. He suggested that pushing more permits through the system while approvals were frozen would likely only create a bottleneck whenever the moratorium ends. In the past week, press and anti-settlement NGOs had also predicted that the expected easings would allow settlers who have already sunk costs into the development process to begin construction, pending the approval of the exceptions committee. Just hours prior to release of the moratorium revisions, Herman denied that such an easing was even under discussion, reiterating that any future amendments would not violate the original intention of the moratorium.

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GOI Ready to Demolish Structures?  
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13. (C) On January 4, Israeli press reported that the GOI, as early as this week, would begin demolishing structures built in violation of its moratorium order. Israeli newspaper, Ma'ariv, quoted an unnamed source in the security establishment as saying that units that will participate in these demolitions have already been briefed on their targets and are ready to execute said orders. Oded Herman told EconOff on January 7 that these reports are categorically "incorrect," adding that the moratorium enforcement apparatus

is not even close to being ready to undertake such actions.  
(Note: As of January 8, no such demolitions had been reported. End note.)

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Inspections Continue, New Inspectors Training  
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¶4. (U) Last week, settler media, Arutz Sheva, reported that Israel's Minister of Public Security, Yitzchak Aharonovich informed settler leaders that as of 28 December, Civil Administration inspectors had visited settlements on 411 occasions, handed out 174 stop-work orders, and confiscated 22 heavy construction vehicles. He also told them that roughly 100 orders were being reconsidered by the Exceptions Committee, with cancellation of the orders a possibility. (Note. In the early days of the moratorium, the IDF provided daily sitreps updating the public on the moratorium's progress, but reports have since ceased.) On 7 January, Oded Herman told EconOff that the 40 new Civil Administration inspectors hired in early December 2009, were currently in training, with many of them accompanying current inspectors into the field to learn the job first hand.

CUNNINGHAM